

First Synod for 50 years in Ireland convoked by Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy

Spring 2015 Synod will set out pathway of genuine renewal for the Diocese

18 month lead-in will be a listening process to determine key issues for consideration at Synod

Sunday, 28 September 2014: The Diocese of Limerick will from December begin an 18 month period of reflection and listening as it builds towards the first Synod held in Ireland since the 1950s and the first in the diocese in over 70 years.

Announced by Bishop Brendan Leahy at a Youth Mass at St. Joseph's Hall, St. Joseph's Parish in the heart of Limerick City, the Synod will be a three day-meeting of 400 delegates in Spring 2016 that will set out a path to enable the Diocese to meet the many challenges it faces going forward and ensure it can deliver, with a sense of renewal as well as partnership among all in the diocese, the message, ministry and mission needed for the future.

Between now and the official Synod launch on Sunday, December 7th the Diocese will be identifying the 400 Synod delegates, which will be drawn from across the Dioceses, and will collectively embark with the delegates on a process that will set out the key issues for consideration at the gathering in Spring 2016.

Bishop Leahy has appointed Fr. Éamonn Fitzgibbon, Episcopal Vicar, as Director of the Synod. Fr Fitzgibbon will co-ordinate the many strands of preparation for the Synod as well as the Synod event itself. He will also engage in a process of arranging for the selection of delegates for the Synod.

Announcing the Synod, Bishop Leahy, who has penned a detailed letter – to be found on the diocesan website www.limerickdiocese.org - outlining the reasons for the Synod, said that the gathering will be true to the meaning of the word 'Synod', which is 'journeying together'.

"Between the launching of the Synod and the 2016 gathering there will be a vast process of reflection and sharing, catechesis and prayer, out of which we will identify the issues that will be discussed at the Synod. I hope that as many as possible throughout the Diocese will be involved.

"For the Synod to be the journey it needs to be, we must all travel together. Everyone has an opinion worth listening to and we must listen before we can learn.

"If the Synod were only to be a meeting of a few days in Spring 2016, it would be a waste of time. The risk would be that it would only produce a report gathering dust on the shelf. The Synod will have to mark a real step forward for our Diocese, indicating a realistic pathway of genuine renewal for all of us who feel faith is important.

“For that to be the case, we will all need to approach the Synod as something that involves us personally. The Synod has to be about more than changing structures.

“The spiritual attitude with which we approach the period of discernment ahead of us is very important. It needs to be a spiritual experience of journeying together in communion with one another, deepening our knowledge of the Faith and a time of prayer.”

He continued: “No one, no matter what age, should feel a stranger to the Synod process. In the coming year and a half there will be many gatherings for discussion, catechesis and prayer.

“We will be opening a website for the Synod. I invite all send in observations or suggestions. And by ‘all’ I mean people of deep faith but also those who might consider they do not have deep faith or seldom take part in worship or feel they have lost their faith.

“We are about to set out on a journey. It’s a chance to ask ourselves: what Church do we want to be as we face the challenges ahead of us? What face of the Church do we want to present to society today in order to serve it with humility? How best can we be salt, light and leaven in the world?”

He added: “Let’s encourage one another to make our own the words of Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter on the Joy of the Gospel: ‘I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation.’ We are at a crucial time in the history of our Diocese. The missionary commitment of each one of us is essential.”

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